AN: Last time, Death had sent an assassin after both Scar and Sarafina. Will the Interceptor get away with it? Read and find out in this exciting new *Poison* story!

Poison

Offer

"Goddamn it," Scar rasped, grunting and straining his muscles as he pushed a metal barrel across the tiled floor of the Sumu lab. "Stupid barrel…"

The floor was surprisingly rough, littered with scratches and burn marks and stains and many other chemical-related blemishes. In a professional drug manufacturing lab, you would expect the place to be looked after a little bit more carefully. But with only two members of staff working in the lab, this wasn't necessarily the case. Even the metallic equipment was marked with orangey rust. Not the type of place you'd want to eat your dinner in…

"Grr…" Scar continued to push the barrel with all his might, creating an unpleasant screeching sound that echoed through the lab. This was the most prominent reason for there being a multitude of scuffs on the floor. A forklift would be more beneficial for moving barrels and equipment around; however, Death didn't seem to be interested in supplying them with one.

"I *hate* barrels…" said Scar. "This is slave labour. It's so *undignified* for a high-ranking individual such as myself."

Scar theorised that the lack of proper equipment to shift other objects around was due to the fact that Sumu wasn't selling as well as it was supposed to. Ever since Death had ordered the production of a new strain of the deadly drug, sales had dropped. On average, it was costing well over a thousand dollars for only a small quantity of Sumu. And, in the vast majority of cases, that was just too much for people to afford now.

Most of the users were simply resorting to smoking marijuana instead. It provided a mild alleviation to the intense cravings that Sumu users underwent. Even if the new strain did increase the drug's addictive effects, then they still wouldn't be able to afford the high price. They would just end up throwing themselves from a cliff in order to finally end their severe hunger for the drug. And that was no way to make money.

Death needed more people to buy the dug. And fast.

"Come on, you worthless container of filth," Scar grumbled as he finally pushed the barrel towards the other end of the lab. Several other barrels were already piled up there. He'd almost spent the whole morning carrying the things down the stairs and then stacking them up in the lab.

The barrels were marked with a stamp that said 'methylamine'. It was an ingredient commonly used in the formation of methamphetamine, but was also used to make Sumu. It wasn't that surprising. After all, there were far stranger ingredients involved in the production of the deadly drug. Scar felt lucky that he wasn't the poor soul who had to find animal snot… Apparently, it gave Sumu its 'spicy kick'. What's next? Toenail clippings and chilli powder? Scar couldn't help but feel disgusted. The things some people put into those drugs…

Scar sat on top of the barrel, panting from all the energy he'd wasted pushing them along the floor. "This job is terrible," he complained, wiping a line of sweat from his forehead. "I deserve a promotion – or a raise."

"Scar!"

Scar's eyes flickered upwards as Hago entered the lab, walking down a metal staircase to meet his partner. "What the hell are you doing down here?" he asked. "I told you to meet me outside. You know? Like we *usually* do."

"I had work to do," Scar said, his tone laced with irritation. He jerked a claw in the direction of the metallic barrels, a tired frown on his face. "I was moving those stupid barrels across the room. Why is that we're always subjected to the slave labour? I'm sure we could find some other animals to do these jobs – like hyenas. You know how those immigrants like their work…"

"It costs money to smuggle in immigrants to do this kind of thing," Hago said, "and you know how tight money is at the moment." He stared at the barrels. "I don't even see what the problem is, anyway. Why do you look so tired?"

"Because I *am* tired," Scar insisted. "Bad back, you know. I've been pushing those barrels all morning."

"Pushing?" Hago's eyes widened in surprise. "Why didn't you just roll the barrels?"

It took about a second for Scar to realise his mistake.

"Ugh…" He winced. How could he have been so stupid?

"It's a barrel. It *rolls*," Hago said. "That's kind of the point."

"Shut up," Scar snapped, storming away from Hago. "I obviously wasn't thinking clearly enough."

"I'll say," retorted Hago. "Do you always need me around to make your brain work properly? You're a fool, Scar. I don't even know how you managed to get this job."

"My chemical expertise is unmatched by any animal!" Scar roared, suddenly furious. His temper was often hard to control – especially when working with irritants, such as Hago. Scar himself was highly volatile, much like the chemicals he worked with.

"Except for me," replied Hago, taking a step towards the lion. "Now, maybe you should stop whining like an infant child and get on with cooking the next batch of Sumu. I think that'd be for the best, don't you?"

"Whatever," Scar muttered. "Let's just get started."

"One moment," Hago said, walking back up the staircase.

"What?" Scar raged, losing his patience within seconds. "Where the hell do you think you're going?"

"I forgot something," Hago lied. "I'll be back in five minutes."

Scar heard the door slam shut, and growled loudly. "You stupid little oaf!" he yelled, resisting the urge to attack some equipment with his claws. "One day I shall tear your head off and throw it into a puddle of mud!"

As Scar finished his little rant, the door opened again. "Well, that was quick—"

Scar cut himself off as he realised that it wasn't Hago who had entered the lab.

A lion – his fur coloured in a strange mixture of black, blonde and tanned – had stepped into the lab. There was an evil smile on his face.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Scar demanded, examining the lion with careful eyes. "Shouldn't you be chasing mice or something?"

It didn't take him long to spot that the lion was holding a pistol in one of his paws.

"I've got a job to do, Scar," the Interceptor said.

And Scar suddenly found the pistol being pointed right at his face.

"What the hell do you think you're playing at, Interceptor?" said Scar, his eyes widening. "Put that down before someone gets hurt."

"Someone *has* to get hurt, Scar," the Interceptor told him. "That's the way the world works."

"What on earth are you talking about?" Scar didn't understand at all what was going on. "Is this a joke?"

"It's my job," the Interceptor retorted. "And – guess what? – *I like it!*"

Scar barely had time to flinch as the Interceptor pulled the trigger.

The lion's brains splattered against the tiled floor, making it more of a mess than it already was. Scar's lifeless body tumbled backwards. He was dead in an instant.

The Interceptor lowered his gun, chuckling victoriously.

His work was done.

"I don't get it," Wazimu said, frowning. "You people keep dragging me into these police investigations when I'm supposed to be a chemist. Do you have any idea how underpaid I am?"

"You're the only person I can trust," TPYMK said, an urgent look in his eyes as he stared down at Wazimu.

The lion was sat on the sofa, raising his eyebrows at the detective. "I'm the only one you can trust?" he said, placing a paw against his chest. "What about Little Miss Druggie over there?"

TPYMK glanced at Sarafina, who was stood beside him. She was giving the detective one of her death glares.

Obviously, people like Wazimu didn't have too much respect for drug users. Neither did TPYMK – but at least he trusted Sarafina now. And, besides, she was clean from drugs. She felt better than she ever had before in her life! That detective was right all along about the harm they caused. She felt empowered ever since getting clean. Reborn,

even.

"We need a little outside help," TPYMK said. "It's been just the two of us for far too long now. We could use your assistance, Wazimu. You're the most intelligent person I know – and the only one I can trust. Get it now?"

Wazimu shrugged. "How on earth am I supposed to help you? Create a few Molotov cocktails to blow up the dealers?" He glanced at Sarafina. "Knowing her, she'd probably drink it!"

Sarafina growled at him. "Don't push your luck," she snarled. "Or I'll shove a test tube right up your—"

"Cool it, Sarafina," TPYMK interrupted. The lioness often found it hard to control her temper when people got on her nerves. However, the detective often kept her chilled out. She didn't really know why…

Maybe they just had a much stronger bond than either of them knew about.

"We can't just argue all the time," TPYMK said. "This is serious business. We have to work together."

"A detective, a druggie and a chemist," said Wazimu. "It doesn't really work, does it?"

"It's all we've got," TPYMK said.

"It's better with just us two," Sarafina protested. "That guy doesn't even know anything about the social side of things. He's just a scientist. I'm the one who's been out on the streets!"

"I've done a lot more with science than you've done in your pitiful life," Wazimu argued.

Sarafina rolled her eyes. "Please – I've experienced a lot more reactions than you have with your little chemicals."

"I've experimented a lot more than you, missy," Wazimu retorted. "My test tubes are bigger than anything *you've* ever handled!"

"And I've had more substances shot right into my mouth than you!" Sarafina yelled. "The result was explosive!"

"*Shut! Up!*" TPYMK cried, stopping their argument. "I'm not sure if I can take much more of this! If you don't want to help, then just leave!"

"Fine by me," Wazimu said, standing up.

TPYMK's eyes widened at him. "*What*?"

"Yeah," Wazimu said. "I can't be bothered to deal with her yelling all of the time. She can rot in a cave for all I care. I hope you OD by tomorrow. Later."

Wazimu stormed out of the living room angrily, leaving a stunned TPYMK and a furious Sarafina.

"Good riddance," she scoffed. "What a creep."

"You really need to keep that temper under control," TPYMK said.

"Stupid little druggie," Wazimu said, growling as he walked down the street. "She's just a piece of filth…"

Wazimu hated drug users the most. Even more than the dealers and the cooks. At least they were doing something worthwhile with their talents; the druggies only wanted to get high. They were just wastes of space. Pointless births. What he'd give to dish out some revenge on them…

The chemist rounded a corner and ended up walking down a long, dark alleyway. He kept his head down, feeling miserable and frustrated with the world. He was underpaid and overqualified. Didn't he deserve better than to be pushed around by a stupid druggie?

Wazimu was so caught up in his thoughts that he didn't spot the lion right in front of him.

"Hey!"

The chemist stumbled backwards as he collided with the animal, frowning in annoyance. "What the big idea, you stupid—"

Wazimu stopped yelling when he saw that the lion had red eyes.

"Jesus…" He was at a loss for words. What kind of animal looked like *this*? It was unthinkable…

"I apologise," said the lion, brushing down his chest with a paw. He sounded surprisingly polite. "I should have moved out of the way."

"Who are you?" Wazimu asked, intrigued by this creature.

"My name is Death," the lion replied, shaking Wazimu by the paw. "And you must be… Wazimu, am I correct?"

"Yeah," said Wazimu. "Wait – how do you know my name?"

"I know everything about you," Death told him, which scared Wazimu slightly. "I am aware that your current financial circumstances aren't too prosperous."

"You're telling me," said Wazimu, letting out a dry laugh. "I make way too little for a chemist at my skill level."

"Well, then… wouldn't you like to change that?" Death asked.

"Of course I would," Wazimu retorted. "I should be making hundreds of thousands of dollars. *Millions*. I'm way smarter than the idiots around here."

"I think I could help with that," Death revealed.

"What do you mean?" asked Wazimu.

"I have… an offer for you," Death said. "One that I think might be of interest to someone with your talents."

"Really?" Wazimu sounded tempted already. "So what is it?"

"A job," Death said.

"What kind of job?" Wazimu questioned.

"Tell me, Wazimu," said Death. "Have you ever heard of a substance called Sumu?"

To Be Continued…

AN: Heh-heh-heh… Not really a cliffhanger so much as it is a twist – but it's a damn good one, isn't it? Now Wazimu is being tempted, and he's a much more stable chemist than Scar. You can see where this is going… See you next time!